

Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin

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National Weather Summary Volume 92, No. 1 December 26, 2004 - January 1, 2005

For additional information, call (202) 720-2397.

Highlights: Stormy weather returned to **California**, the **Great Basin**, and the **Southwest** following a month-long respite, causing local flooding and mudslides but padding high-elevation snow packs and further easing long-term drought. Much of **California** netted at least 4 inches of precipitation, with some rainfall totals in excess of 1 foot in the mountains near **Los Angeles**. The **Sierra Nevada** snow pack contained an average of 9 inches of water equivalent on December 27, exactly normal for the date, but gained an additional 7 inches of liquid—to reach 16 inches (159 percent of normal)—by New Year's Day. Farther north, however, snow packs remained mostly below normal for this time of year across the **northern Rockies** and **northern Intermountain West**, where only light to moderate precipitation fell. Farther east, snow blanketed much of the **Dakotas** and **Montana**, followed by an invasion of sharply colder air. The snow provided much-needed moisture and insulation for winter wheat, but increased livestock stress and hampered rural travel. Farther south, mild, dry weather maintained generally favorable conditions for winter wheat on the **central and southern Plains**, although unusual warmth (temperatures averaging as much as 20 degrees F above normal and peaking near 75 degrees F) caused wheat to lose some winter hardiness. Record-high temperatures also overspread the **Midwest**, melting residual snow and creating muddy conditions across the **eastern Corn Belt**. Mild, uncharacteristically snow-free weather continued across the **upper Midwest** for most of the week, although ice and snow accumulations accompanied colder weather toward year's end. Meanwhile, very warm weather arrived in the **South** and much of the **East**, following an early-week chill. Snow blanketed the **Atlantic Seaboard** on December 26 from the **eastern Carolinas to coastal New England**, but mostly dry weather prevailed thereafter across the **South** and **East**.

Early in the week, cold weather lingered across the **South**, where **Corpus Christi, TX** (24 degrees F on December 26), collected a daily-record low. Farther east, a strong low-pressure system crossing **Florida** contributed to high winds and a 3- to 6-foot storm surge along the State's west coast. Early on December 26, **Clearwater Beach, FL**, reported a peak gust to 61 m.p.h. and a 6.1-foot storm surge. Meanwhile, a trace of snow fell on December 26 in **Charleston, SC**, and **Savannah, GA**, the first frozen precipitation ever recorded in either location on that date. Farther north, December 26 snowfall totals included 12.5 inches in **Newport News, VA**, and 6.0 inches in **Tarboro, NC**. On December 26-27, snowfall in excess of 1 foot accumulated across parts of **eastern New England**, including **Massachusetts** locations such as **Chatham** (18.0 inches) and the **Blue Hill Observatory** (14.0 inches). Snow lingered downwind of the **Great Lakes** through December 26, when daily-record totals in **Michigan** included 8.5 inches in **Alpena** and 5.0 inches in **Marquette**.

The first in a series of storm systems arrived in **California** on December 27, resulting in daily-record rainfall totals in locations such as **Red Bluff** (2.85 inches) and **San Francisco** (2.24 inches). **Santa Barbara, CA**,

received daily-record amounts on consecutive days (December 27 and 28), totaling 4.61 inches. Elsewhere in **southern California**, downtown **Los Angeles** netted 5.55 inches of rain on December 28, smashing its single-day record for the month (previously, 4.86 inches on December 31, 1933). It was also **Los Angeles'** wettest day since January 26, 1956, when 5.71 inches fell. Another storm system tore into the **California coast** on December 29, helping to produce southerly wind gusts of 58 m.p.h. in **San Diego** and 59 m.p.h. in **San Francisco**. **San Diego's** wind set a record for the month, previously set with a gust to 44 m.p.h. in December 1991. In the mountains of **southern California**, December 26-29 rainfall totals reached 14.69 inches at **Matilija Canyon in Ventura County** and 11.13 inches at **Opids Camp in Los Angeles County**.

Torrential rain and high-elevation snow swept into the **Great Basin** and the **Southwest** on December 29, when daily-record totals included 3.33 inches in **Flagstaff, AZ**, and 1.13 inches in **Las Vegas, NV**. **Flagstaff's** total set a record for the month (previously, 2.95 inches on December 30, 1951) and marked its second-highest daily amount on record behind a 3.93-inch sum on February 19, 1993. **Las Vegas** netted 2.10 inches in a 24-hour period on December 28-29, shattering its December 1940 rainfall record of 1.78 inches. Farther north, daily-record snowfall totals on December 30 included 6.0 inches in **Elko, NV**, 5.8 inches in **Great Falls, MT**, and 4.8 inches in **Grand Forks, ND**. In **Reno, NV**, December 30-31 precipitation totaled 1.53 inches, which fell in the form of more than 2 feet of snow on the valley floor.

In contrast, record warmth arrived on the **central Plains** by December 29, when **Valentine, NE**, posted a daily-record high of 63 degrees F. Warmth expanded the following day, resulting in more than two dozen daily-record highs. December 30 highs reached 70 degrees F in locations such as **St. Joseph, MO**, and **Topeka, KS**. New Year's Eve featured daily-record warmth in **Midwestern** locations such as **Springfield and Lincoln, IL** (both 65 degrees F). Additional records were established on January 1 in more than a dozen locations from the **central and southern Plains to the East Coast**, including **Lufkin, TX** (78 degrees F), and **Washington, DC** (69 degrees F). In contrast, snow lingered on the **northern Plains** and showery weather persisted along the **West Coast**. In **Montana**, **Glasgow** measured daily-record snowfalls on December 30 and January 1 (6.6 and 4.0 inches, respectively). In **North Dakota**, Williston's 10.5-inch snowfall on New Year's Day was a single-day January record (previously, 10.3 inches on January 16, 1995). Farther west, **Sacramento, CA**, closed the year with consecutive daily-record rainfall totals (1.37 and 0.67 inches on December 30-31).

The year ended on a stormy note across much of **southern and western Alaska**, where **Kotzebue** received 11.8 inches of snow in a 24-hour period on December 29-30. **Kotzebue's** monthly snowfall of 34.0 inches surpassed its December 1988 record of 23.6 inches. By January 2, snow depths across **southern and western Alaska** included 34 inches in **Nome** and 33 inches in **Kotzebue** and **McGrath**. Meanwhile in **southeastern Alaska**, **Juneau** (10.67 inches, or 197 percent of normal) completed its second-wettest December on record, behind only the 1997 total of 13.61 inches. Weekly temperatures ranged from as much as 6 degrees F below normal in **southeastern Alaska** to more than 10 degrees F above normal throughout the **western part of the State**. Farther south, very wet conditions developed across much of **Hawaii**. On **Oahu**, **Honolulu** netted daily-record totals on December 27 (3.34 inches) and January 1 (1.61 inches). **Lihue, Kauai**, measured a weekly total of 7.15 inches, aided by a daily-record sum of 3.91 inches on New Year's Eve. Elsewhere on **Kauai**, late-week rainfall (in a 72-hour period from December 30 - January 2) included 10.10 inches in **Wailua** and 8.82 inches in **Kokee**.

National Agricultural Summary
December 27, 2004 - January 2, 2005

Highlights: Above-normal temperatures prevailed across most of the Nation. In the wake of historic snowstorms over the Christmas weekend, high temperatures reached over 70 degrees Fahrenheit across the Gulf Coast, and over 80 degrees Fahrenheit in southern Texas. Snow cover melted rapidly with the return of warm weather in the southern Great Plains, northern Delta, and Ohio Valley. Meanwhile, stormy weather returned to the western one-third of the Nation, bringing heavy rainfall to California but lighter precipitation further inland. Though heavy snow fell across the northern Rocky Mountains and upper Midwest late in the week, the lack of protective snow cover on winter wheat in these areas remained a concern for winter wheat growers. In the central and southern Great Plains, conditions were mostly dry and unseasonably warm, with temperatures averaging over 9 degrees Fahrenheit above normal. Late in the week, mixed precipitation fell across much of the central Corn Belt.

Heavy rainfall in Hawaii slowed fieldwork and adversely affected some vegetable crops but was beneficial for papaya growth. In California, heavy rainfall also limited fieldwork but improved pasture conditions. Arizona growers harvested a variety of vegetable and citrus crops, while cotton advanced to 97 percent harvested. Harvest of sugarcane, citrus, and vegetables continued in Florida.

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